



The Power of Labelling: How People are Categorized and Why It Matters

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The Power of Labelling illuminates a fundamental and intriguing dimension of social and political life. Striking cases from a range of policy contexts generate eyeopening analyses of labelling's causes and consequences, uses and abuses, and of alternatives in thinking and relating.

DES GASPER, INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES, THE HAGUE

The authors convincingly and often vividly explain how the unavoidable framings and labellings of the objects of policy secrete relations of power which can obscure as much as they reveal and often lead, in policy itself, to perverse outcomes. Their detail is riveting, their analyses persuasive, what they suggest realistic and deeply sensible. This immensely readable collection is indispensable for anyone who wants to think about how they think about 'development', and should be forced on all who don't.

GEOFFREY HAWTHORN, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

This is an essential book not only for those interested in understanding the development industry but also for development practitioners. It discusses key questions concerning the ways in which knowledge is generated by development agencies and reaffirms the importance of understanding who categorizes people, why and how.

R. L. STIRRAT, PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

'Very important.'

Martin Kalungu-Banda, Oxfam GB

What does it mean to be part of the mass known as 'The Poor'? What visions are conjured up in our minds when someone is labelled 'Muslim'? What assumptions do we make about their needs, values and politics? How do we react individually and as a society? Who develops the labels, what power do they carry and how do such labels affect how people are treated?

This timely book tackles the critical and controversial issue of how people are labelled and categorized, and how their problems are framed and dealt with. Drawing on vast international experience and current theory, the authors examine how labels are constituted and applied by a variety of actors, including development policy makers, practitioners and researchers. The book exposes the intense and complex politics involved in processes of labelling, and highlights how the outcomes of labelling can undermine stated development goals. Importantly, one of the book's principal objectives is to suggest how policy makers and professionals can tackle negative forms of labelling and encourage processes of 'counter-labelling', to enhance poverty reduction and human rights, and to tackle issues of race relations and global security. The Afterword encapsulates these ideas and provides a good basis for reflection, further debate and action.

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Ed Abraham:

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